DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 443 CE 052 419

TITLE WRNAFE Planning and Special Educational Needs. Development Planning in NAFE. Bulletin No. 11.
INSTITUTION Further Education Unit, London (England).
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 7p.; For related documents, see CE 051 939 and CE 052 082.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Vocational Education; *Disabilities; *Educational Needs; Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; *Job Training; Planning; Postsecondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *England

ABSTRACT

A project to investigate the extent to which English local education authorities (LEA) purposely planned services for adult students with special education needs (SEN) had these three stages: (1) analysis of 71 LEA second-round plans to identify references to SEN and examples of good practice; (2) analysis of questionnaire responses from 21 LEAs and 64 colleges for evaluation of work-related nonadvanced further education (WRNAFE) planning; and (3) analysis of structured interview responses from matched pairs of LEAs and college representatives from LEAs. Discussions with Training Authority and Department of Education and Science officials were also part of the study. Among the major findings were the following: (1) more than two-thirds of the 71 LEA plans dealt with SEN in some detail, with good practice relating to SEN recorded in 31; (2) start-up provision for SEN usually involved special courses; (3) the most satisfactory planning process was usually a joint activity between LEAs and local colleges; (4) LEAs have advanced their planning for staff development to meet SEN faster than any other aspect of WRNAFE planning surveyed by this project; and (5) LEAs have not yet recognized a high priority for management development. The study also identified six guarantees (e.g., guaranteed procedures for admission and progression) included in SEN policy statements that are considered effective. (CML)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN NAFE

ED306443

Bulletin No. 11 April 1989 *ISSN 0269-1388*

WRNAFE Planning and Special Educational Needs

FEU is now preparing the final report on a project to measure the curriculum impact of WRNAFE (RP311), with the aim of publishing it in the summer term.

As part of the exercise to appraise curriculum change, FEU commissioned a survey linked to the project, designed to gather information on provision for those with special educational needs (SEN). Such provision was given a 'priority' label in the national guidance for second round planning. How far this exhortation in NAFE guidelines evoked a response and also how far LEAs viewed their SEN provision as work-related rather than continued education are the subjects of this bulletin.

Geoff Stanton
Chief Officer, FEU

Introduction

In 1987, the National Bureau for Handicapped Students (now SKILL--the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) published *Catching Up*, Richard Stowell's report to the Department of Education and Science (DES) on provision for students with SEN in further and higher education. This report showed that over 45,000 students with special needs had been enrolled in over 300 English colleges during the 1985-86 session. To determine how far SEN provision had been planned rather than merely permitted or encouraged has become timely in light of the 1988 Education Reform Act's requirement upon Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to have regard to SEN in their strategic planning of further education (FE) in general.

Project survey

The survey was undertaken in three stages:

1. Analysis of 71 LEA second-round plans, available in FEU, to identify references to SEN and examples of good practice.
2. Preliminary questionnaires to the 21 LEAs and 64 colleges in the RP311 sample, for evaluation of work-related non-advanced further education (WRNAFE) planning to supplement the first-stage analysis and, in particular, to identify a smaller sample whose practice justified closer study.
3. Analysis of structured interview responses from matched pairs of LEAs and college representatives from 10 LEAs.

In addition, the survey has drawn upon:

- the results of a parallel National Bureau for Handicapped Students (NBHS)/FEU evaluation of LEAs' use of Grant-Related In-Service Training (GRIST) funds on staff development for SEN in FE (which drew upon the same sample of 21 LEAs);
- discussions with Training Agency officials and advisers responsible for the agency's contribution to WRNAFE planning at national level;
- discussions with DES officials responsible for the implementation within FE of the Education Reform Act.

LC 3 415

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B Drysdale
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Evidence of planning for special needs

The challenge is to plan and provide for 'an appropriate range of education and training opportunities for those over compulsory school age who have special educational needs'.

Nearly two-thirds of the 71 LEA plans surveyed made more than passing reference to SEN. Five of the six large metropolitan authorities went into SEN with some thoroughness, usually in association with a spectrum of equal opportunities policies. Plans which bore internal evidence of preparation at college rather than LEA level (mainly in small metropolitan authorities with one college) were more likely to include references to SEN. As might be expected, nearly all authorities planning NAFE across the board referred to SEN; but of the 49 LEAs restricting their plans to WRNAFE, only half made more than a passing reference to SEN.

Good practice relating to SEN (in one form or another) was recorded in 31 LEA plans—a higher proportion in counties (92%) and larger metropolitan authorities (80%) than in small metropolitan authorities (30%). SEN is more often seen in planning as an extension of general education than as leading directly to vocational education, as specific course provision rather than as a framework of support available throughout the curriculum.

Development of special needs policy

Two major principles which ought to inform policy have been identified in *College Administration* (Longman with NATFHE, 2nd edn, 1988). 'The first principle is that of ensuring the widest access to the curriculum offered by the post-school education service, in all institutions and at all academic levels. The consensus is that normal entry criteria should apply and flexibility should extend to applicants with special needs, in the same way as to others who have been unable to follow traditional academic routes into post-school education, supported as necessary by special arrangements (and sometimes by special courses). The second principle is that of ensuring progression to more advanced courses, such that students with special educational needs are not offered a more restrictive curriculum than others.'

Such statements become effective only if they go beyond general principles and establish specific guarantees binding upon LEA and college(s) alike. (At present, school leavers with SEN have better guarantees from the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) than from FE.) A consequence of joint planning is the desirability of consistent statements at both LEA and college level. Since disability is clearly an equal opportunities issue, improvements might be delayed indefinitely while the perfect comprehensive equal opportunities policy is hammered out. However, action now is better than perfect decision-making next year.

Effective policy statements should be designed to ensure:

- a guaranteed range of provision;
- guaranteed procedures for admission and progression;
- guaranteed support for students (both by way of resources with colleges and through discretionary awards);
- guaranteed rights for individual students (actual and potential);
- guaranteed accessibility of provision in local colleges;
- monitoring procedures to ensure delivery of the guarantees.

They should also embody a commitment to:

- staff development;
- inter-agency development and planning;
- consultation with consumers.

Policy statements require:

- definition of SEN, corresponding in the context of FE to the 'statements' required for schoolchildren under the 1981 Education Act;
- targets for improvements in provision and take-up to provide the basis for effective monitoring;
- programmes for improvements in buildings and plans necessary to achieve physical access and support.

Integration of special needs provision

'Start-up' provision usually takes the form of special courses. This is useful in two respects:

- It offers an introduction which is especially supportive and student-centred for students with particular special needs in the college environment.
- It produces a core of staffing and other resources which can then be used to support individual students in 'mainstream' courses as well.

It is also dangerous in two other respects:

- It may encourage students to remain in an over-supportive environment, past the point where they should be tackling mainstream courses.
- It may encourage the rest of the college staff to regard SEN as an issue not impacting upon them.

The present consensus is that special courses should have, as their main aim, progression to the mainstream educational, training or workplace environment.

Need for partnership in SEN planning

Within the LEA, the planning process usually involves FE officers and advisers on the one hand and senior college staff on the other. There are examples of LEA officers planning without significant college input and of colleges undertaking strategic planning on a delegated basis for the LEA (usually in single-college authorities). It is even possible to find an example of both groups planning separately! The survey evidence suggests more satisfaction with the results of a joint planning exercise, in which LEA policies and priorities inform and are informed by college priorities in their local context.

Structured interviews asked whether the planning process was LEA- or college-based, whether it was effective in securing improvements to the service, whether it encompassed SEN, and whether there was a planned transition from school to college for fifth-formers (from both mainstream and special education). The results are shown in figure 1.

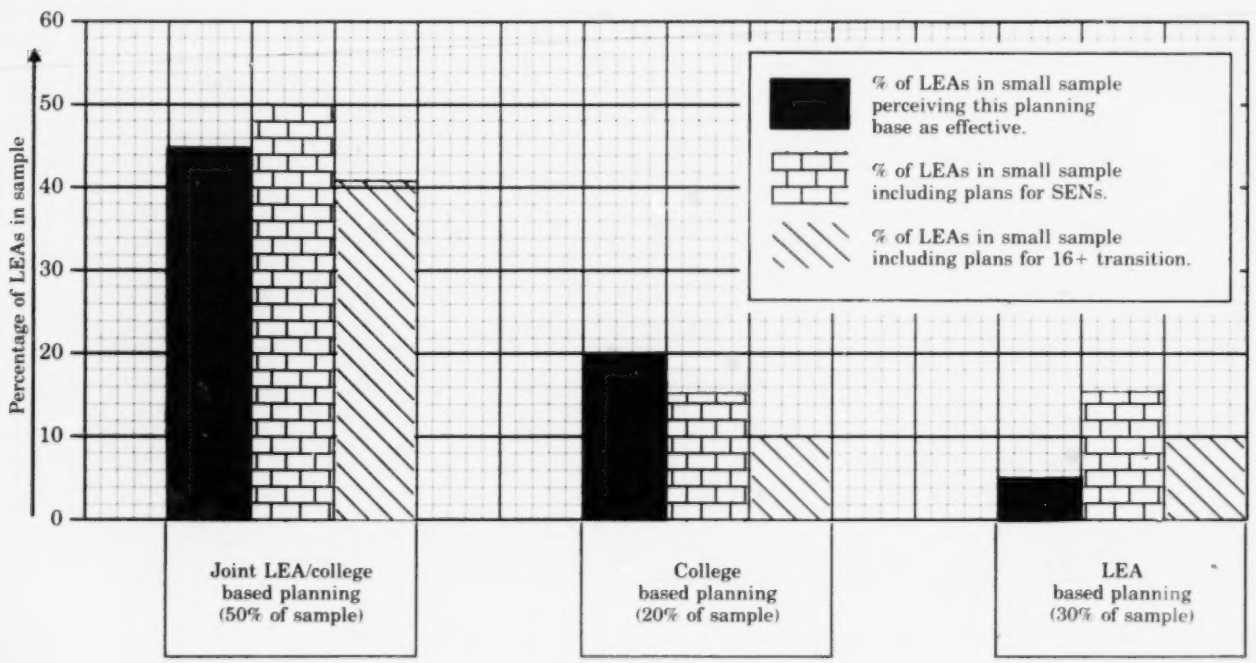
However, the use of percentages in the graph tends to obscure the following facts:

- The small sample of 10 authorities chosen for special study includes a preponderance of LEAs which jointly plan with their colleges. However, this is not an aberration of the sample. The National Survey (RP311) conducted in May 1988 showed that 64 out of a sample of 81 LEAs (79%) involved their colleges in a joint approach to WRNAFE planning.
- Overall, the joint planning process was perceived as more effective than the college-based approach, and much more effective than the LEA-based one.
- Considered across the sample of 10 LEAs, WRNAFE processes were perceived as more effective in recognising SEN than planning the transition from school to college for young people with SEN.

Evidence from the survey suggests that school-college transition continues to present problems for a significant proportion of authorities. In some cases this was consequent upon political decision (or indecision); in others upon traditional demarcations between schools and FE-based officers and advisers. In SEN, as elsewhere, harmful competition between schools and colleges can inhibit smooth transition for young people from one to the other.

The challenge within LEAs is to harness the energies of schools and colleges to secure real progression and

Figure 1 Perceptions of the effectiveness of different approaches to WRNAFE planning


60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Percentage of LEAs in sample
% of LEAs in small sample perceiving this planning base as effective.
% of LEAs in small sample including plans for SENs.
% of LEAs in small sample including plans for 16+ transition.
Joint LEA/college based planning (50% of sample)
College based planning (20% of sample)
LEA based planning (30% of sample)

choice for young people with disabilities and special learning needs as they approach the 16+ discontinuity.

However, the planning process is not simply an internal procedure of concern only to the senior staff of schools, colleges and LEAs. The survey elicited no evidence of major involvement by external influences, though a considerable amount of consultation on plans takes place at the draft stage. On a percentage scale, other potential partners to WRNAFE plans were consulted to the following extent:

Careers service	85%
Specialist careers officers	65%
Committees of the authority	60%
College governors	55%
Training Agency officers	55%
Employers (via governors)	45%
Employers (directly consulted)	35%
College Academic Boards	35%
Specialist Training Agency officers	15%
Students' Unions	10%
Neighbouring LEAs	Minimal
Disability organisations	Not mentioned

Results of the survey suggest that much of the consultation with the organisations listed above is little more than a formality, leading to little by way of redrafting the objectives and targets proposed in WRNAFE plans.

To summarise:

- The planning process within the LEA usually involves FE officers and advisers and senior college staff; it does not usually involve special schools officers and advisers or the schools themselves in planning progression through the 16-plus discontinuity.
- It does not characteristically involve the careers service or its specialist officers, social services, housing, economic development or planning departments beyond the consultation level.
- The planning process does not (as it affects SEN) characteristically involve employers, Training Agency staff, Area Manpower Boards, voluntary organisations in the field of disability, the DHSS, or Area Health Authorities (though an increasing minority of LEAs have made a reality of Joint Care schemes with LEAs—see *Care and Education in the Community* (Special Needs Occasioned Paper No. 6, Longman for FEU, 1988).
- The planning process is not particularly open to attention and influence from consumers and the public. Within colleges, students' unions, academic boards and college governors receive rather than provide information and policy consideration; committee attention at LEA level is generally limited.
- There is no evidence of significant levels of inter-LEA planning of SEN provision at the post-school stage.

The challenge is to find the best ways of consulting the whole community—employers, employees; actual and potential, parents, service providers of many kinds—so that both understanding of and commitment to SEN planned objectives can be increased.

Curricular opportunities for special needs

How far has the WRNAFE planning process acted as a dynamic force for improving curricular opportunities for those with special needs? The survey has investigated SEN provision aimed at the 16-19 age group, and also provision—often, but not always, the same—open to adults. Also regarded as important is the ability of SEN students to progress from one course to another, to access the whole curriculum in precisely the same way as all other students, but with additional help as required. Figure 2 shows how far the sample of 10 LEAs have progressed in their present planning arrangements, and how far they have yet to go.

Figure 2

Special requirement	*Number of LEAs planning SEN provision*		
	16-19	*Adults*	*Progression*
Access for sensory difficulties (hearing, sight)	8	6	4
Access for physical difficulties	8	4	3
Learning difficulties (moderate)	7	4	4
Learning difficulties (severe)	5	3	2
Emotional and behavioural difficulties	5	2	2
Language disorders (including dyslexia)	3	2	2
Other difficulties*	3	2	2

*Other difficulties planned for included specific learning difficulties, profound multiple learning difficulties (for young people previously institutionalised in long-stay hospitals), and mental illness.

LEAs were also asked about the extent to which linked courses were made available to smooth the transition from school to college; every LEA in the sample offered some linked courses, but seldom to all relevant courses.

The survey also investigated the extent to which self-advocacy (confidence building) training formed part of planned curriculum provision. Although there was common recognition of its importance at LEA and college levels, particularly in the context of severe learning difficulties, language disorders, and mental

illness, no clear planning framework has yet emerged.

LEAs were also asked about the extent to which they planned for open learning to contribute to extending educational opportunities for those with SEN. There is as yet no evidence of widespread planning to that end, but some evidence of doubt as to its appropriateness without significant staff resources exists.

The challenge is to make it possible for students to progress from courses provided specifically for students with learning difficulties into the full range of the mainstream curriculum (with appropriate support). For students with special needs, as for all others, good curriculum practice demonstrates:

CONTINUITY
PROGRESSION
COHERENCE

Resource provision

Issues under this head take two essential forms: kind and quantity. Without specific forms of support (a specialist teacher of the blind, a speech therapist, a care attendant for the immobile or incontinent, a specially adapted VDU and keyboard, an induction loop facility, large-print books and enlarging photocopiers, a brailling machine, model living accommodation in which to learn skills of independent living, etc.), individuals or student groups will be unable to take advantage of the FE facilities available. The incidence of certain support requirements, like the disabilities to which they relate, is infrequent and geographically scattered — and may occur in the context of any one of the whole range of curriculum areas. It is thus likely that unit costs will not only be higher than average, but also strongly individual and not wholly susceptible to formula funding. Flexible approaches will be necessary, and could cause particular problems if local financial management reduces the commitment of some colleges to students with SEN producing higher unit costs not necessarily reflected in the financial weighting used to calculate a college's budget share.

Staff development

In a technical sense, LEAs have advanced their planning for staff development to meet SEN faster than any other aspect of WRNAFE planning surveyed, largely as a result of GRIST (now Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme (LEATGS)) requirements. Any significant improvement or increase in general provision, however, is dependent on the effective development of college staff across the board. The Stafford report (*A Special Professionalism*, DES, 1987) provides an authoritative needs analysis. Exclusive dependence on LEATGS for the future is likely to be inadequate in respect of teaching staff concerned for only part of their time with SEN, and will wholly bypass the 'customer care' development needs of support (non-teaching) staff. Whereas staff development to meet special needs in schools was seen by 12 of the 16 LEAs in the parallel survey as warranting higher expenditure than indicative GRIST allocations, only eight of these same LEAs took that view of staff development for special needs in FE, and only four of these gave FE staff development a higher priority than in schools. The inescapable conclusion is that planning was still based on historic considerations (and the presence of advisers on schools provision) rather than contemporary needs analysis.

Management development

The Stafford report recognised a high priority for the training of managers within the FE system (both LEA officers and principals and their senior colleagues within colleges). On the evidence of the survey, planning has not yet shared in that recognition; attempts to provide such training at national level have benefited special needs co-ordinators at college level rather than senior managers. Regional conferences or seminars, actively supported by Chief Education Officers, have fared better.

Action planning

Not surprisingly, the limited number of LEAs which had formulated plans for specific action to meet SEN rather than maintenance and development of existing practice appeared more committed to change and improvement. The most comprehensive action plan included the following headings, and was broadly supported by LEAs surveyed:

- Access;
- curriculum and provision;
- staffing;
- support services;
- staff development;
- marketing and promotion;
- resources and finance.

Measures of success

Measures of performance are notoriously difficult to apply within the education system; traditional starting points, as for example success rates in public examinations, are particularly hard to apply in the field of SEN. The survey has identified no LEA which applied performance indicators systematically to SEN provision in FE. However, none of the LEAs was opposed to the principle of applying performance measurements. Fortunately, the issues which merge in measuring success in SEN provision are familiar in the mainstream context:

- course retention and completion rates;
- progression to FE, HE and training;
- employability;
- evidence of new competences acquired.

In this last context, skills for living and personal relationships and the capability for self-advocacy, as well as the occupational competences normally appropriate, were clearly of importance. Short-life working groups established by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications were due to produce guidance intended to be useful in the context of assessment procedures for people with SEN seeking vocational qualifications. For the system as a whole, one robust performance indicator was advanced: a significant increase in the numbers of people over 16 with SEN making use of further education.

Conclusion

LEAs have always risen to new challenges; the social, economic and legislative framework is in place for considerable progress towards the integration of people with special needs into further, higher and adult education, training, and the labour market more generally. Strategic planning will be the major lever available for LEAs to determine the speed and local direction of that progress; they will want to use that leverage to the full.

John Baillie, Principal of Newham Community College, acting as consultant to FEU (RP311), conducted the survey described in this bulletin. Enquiries on the content of the bulletin and FEU policy on SEN curricular provision should be addressed to:

Patricia Hood
Room 1/2, FEU
2 Orange Street
London WC2H 7WE
Tel: 01-321 0433 ext. 261

Requests for additional copies of this bulletin should be addressed to the FEU Information Centre (ext. 256).